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ABSTRACT

Demands for reform in all curriculum areas in the public schools were made during the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's. Reformers believed that two things needed to be done to change curriculum: (1) develop higher quality materials, and (2) educate teachers in new subject matter which they were being asked to teach. To meet these needs, extensive projects developed new materials in the social sciences. Teachers participated in summer and academic-year institutes offering courses in content. For various reasons, however, the hoped-for marriage between subject matter competency and appropriate uses of the new curricula did not occur. If curriculum is to change, new approaches to teacher inservice programs need to be developed making the variety of new social science curricula the major focus of inservice activities. In addition, teachers need to learn the skills necessary for creative adaptation of the curricula to local community settings. Listed characteristics of successful programs and procedures to enhance the chances for a successful inservice program for teachers help insure curriculum change. (Author)

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Diffusion of Curriculum Products Through Inservice Education

John D. Haas

During the late 1950's and throughout the 60's there were extensive demands for reform in all curriculum areas in the public schools. During this era the reformers believed that if the curriculum was to be changed, two things needed to be done -- higher quality materials than were currently available needed to be developed, and teachers needed to know more about the new subject(s) (e.g. anthropology) which they were being asked to teach.

The thrust for curriculum materials change in the social sciences at this time took the form of extensive curriculum materials development projects located primarily at universities across the nation. A number of curriculum development projects began with seed money from private foundations, such as the Ford Foundation, which provided the initial funds for the High School Geography Project, and the Carnegie Foundation, which supported the early work of Lawrence Senesh in developing his elementary economic education program. However, the major support for curriculum improvement came from Federal agencies, particularly the U.S. Office of Education and the National Science Foundation. Some projects spent as little as $250,000 (ECON 12)(USOE), while others spent several million dollars (Man: A Course of Study) (NSF).

The projects were directed and staffed either by academicians in the colleges of arts and sciences, or by members of professional associations such as the American Anthropological Association, or by educators in schools of education teamed with scientists from the various disciplines. In most cases, the materials contained up-to-date content from the disciplines, appealing student materials, specific instructions to the teacher on how content and

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materials should be used for the greatest effect, and many new teaching strategies such as inquiry, games, simulations, and questioning techniques.

A second perceived need was that teachers had to possess more up-dated knowledge in the social science disciplines. Somehow it was thought that if more content courses were taken by teachers, this would enable them to use the new national curricula successfully. To this end, the National Science Foundation supported summer and academic-year institutes for teachers. Under the National Defense Education Act (more recently under the Education Professions Development Act), USOE conducted a number of similar summer institutes and experienced teacher fellowship programs.

It became increasingly apparent, however, that the hoped-for marriage between subject matter competency and appropriate uses of the new curricula was not occurring. In many cases teachers did not comprehend the scope and thrust of the new materials packages, nor could they relate the materials to the social science concepts on which the materials were based. Also, teachers seldom applied their own creativity to adapting the new curricula to local and regional needs. In other cases, teachers taught the new materials mechanically, and often in traditional expository ways. Finally, in some cases teachers, supervisors and administrators were never apprised of the variety of new curricula currently available.

New approaches to teacher inservice programs now need to be developed. In addition to making the variety of new social science curricula the major focus of inservice activities, teachers need to learn the skills necessary for creative adaptation of the curricula to local community settings.

As a result of my involvement in Inservice Institutes, AYI's, LDP's and RPW's during the past four or five years, I have had the opportunity to assess the impact of these types of funded activities on curriculum implementation. I have concluded that the following characteristics are necessary

for successful inservice projects:

1. Teacher inservice programs need to be supported by teams of social scientists, educationists, experienced curriculum developers, and experienced school teachers.
2. Programs should emphasize learning of a curriculum project's materials, teaching strategies and rationales.
3. Programs should be oriented to implementation in schools rather than to university courses.
4. The piecemeal approach to inservice should be abandonned in favor of a more coherent design involving a sequence of training, piloting, innovative adapting, and expanded implementation.
5. Programs should create climates in which creative local adaptation of major national curricula is encouraged.

I have found from my experiences that the following procedures enhance the chances for success and implementation in inservice programs for teachers:

1. Recruitment and selection of participants should be by teams from schools or school districts rather than by individual interest, willingness or availability.
2. Target participant teams should be from a school or school district which can be readily served by staff in followup, back-home work.
3. New social science curricula should be presented by use of selected demonstration lessons followed by analysis, evaluation and suggested local or individual adaptations (i.e. practice-to-theory; demonstration-to-emulation).
4. Participant teams require administrative support (both moral and fiscal) at all stages in the training/implementation process.
5. Approximately 10-20% of inservice program should be allocated to team-building and team-planning activities.

6. Since diffusion of curricula involves communicating with, demonstrating for, and reacting to questions from other teachers, parents, etc., some program activities should allow participants to explore and practice the role of "teacher of teachers."
7. Commitments for purchase of curriculum materials and teachers' released time need to be negotiated with school administrators prior to conducting inservice implementation workshops.